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News Release

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Corps of Engineers awards Baltimore Harbor and Anchorages contract

Baltimore – The Baltimore District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers awarded a contract for approximately \$23.7 million to the low bidder, Weeks Marine, Inc., of Covington La., on Feb. 4, 2002, for work to improve the existing anchorages and channels in Baltimore Harbor.

The navigational improvements include the deepening and widening of channels, anchorages and berths, providing cut-off angles and constructing a turning basin at the head of the Fort McHenry Channel. These improvements will provide for safer and more efficient accommodations of modern container ships and other vessels entering the Port of Baltimore.

The multi-year contract is being cost shared by the Corps of Engineers and the Maryland Port Administration at a split of roughly 70 percent federal and 30 percent local. A benefit-cost analysis using analyses conducted in 2001, showed the project will provide benefits 1.3 times greater than the project costs.

“We are incredibly pleased to see this project move forward, thanks to the work of the Army Corps of Engineers and our Congressional representatives,” said John D. Porcari, Secretary of Maryland Department of Transportation. “It will give us anchorages and a channel system consistent with industry standards and able to accommodate today’s shipping fleet while helping secure the competitiveness of the Port of Baltimore.”

All of the dredged material resulting from these improvements, an estimated 3.9 million cubic yards, will be placed at the State of Maryland's Hart-Miller Island containment facility.

Congress authorized this project as part of the Water Resources Development Act of 1999. The Baltimore Harbor anchorage areas were initially authorized between 1909 and 1945. Since then the size of shipping vessels has greatly increased making the width and depth of many channels in the port insufficient. Large vessels requiring anchorage must currently anchor 25 miles south of the Port of Baltimore in the naturally deep water at the Annapolis Anchorage Grounds. An overview of the Baltimore Harbor Anchorages and Channels project is available at <http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/projects/Maryland/Anchorages/index.html>.

“This project has undergone a rigorous review process by all levels of the Corps. It meets the objective of federal navigation projects by contributing to national economic development while protecting the environment,” said Col. Charles J. Fiala Jr., U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Baltimore District commander.

The project is expected to be completed in the spring of 2003.